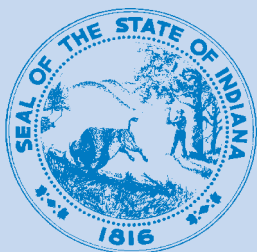


State Representative

Bill Crawford

The 2000 Session of the Indiana Legislature



How To Reach
Representative

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Spring, 2000

Dear Friends,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly ended on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and a proposal to increase benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included some other information that you might find useful.

In the coming months, I will be working on interim study committees. Study committees allow legislators the opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth than is permitted during the session.

Please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842 if you have questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,



E-mail updates available on state legislative issues

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

Inside this newsletter

Tobacco Settlement

Helping Working Families

School Safety

Protecting the Environment



Session News

School Safety

School buses will be required to display the school or school district and its corresponding number on the back and top of the vehicles. This new requirement will make it easier to identify school buses and students in an emergency. In the case of an overturned school bus, officials will be able to identify the bus and find out where it is from in order to notify parents and locate medical information on students.

National concern about school safety played a role in passage of legislation that allows school security plans to remain confidential. The legislation also provides that school boards may meet in private to discuss the assessment, design and implementation of school safety and security measures.

We also enacted legislation that stiffens the penalties for speeding violations near a school to a Class B infraction. The maximum penalty for this offense is \$1,000.

Legislature allocates tobacco funds

Bi-partisan agreement to help several programs and groups

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will be used for health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.

The final bill was the result of many months of work by legislators on both sides of the aisle. From the start, we have attempted to assure that most of the funding goes to health care and efforts to reduce the use of tobacco products.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities. Minority health initiatives will receive \$2.5 million.

This is a considerable accomplishment for a short session of the Legislature, and it is a tribute to the willingness of officials to set aside partisan differences in order to pass bills that will have long-term benefits for the people of our state.

Senior citizens will also see benefits

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food to eat or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.



Rep. Crawford with Rep. John Day in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Bias Crimes

Legislation enabling law enforcement officials to track bias crimes in Indiana was approved by the General Assembly. Officials would be required to report the collected data to the Indiana Central Repository for Criminal History.

The legislation defines a bias crime as a crime that a person commits based on another person's race, creed, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

The purpose of this legislation is to use the collected data to assess whether or not a bias crime problem exists in Indiana. Many other states already report bias crimes and use the data for assessment purposes.

Census 2000

Why should you fill out the form?

The results of Census 2000 will impact millions of dollars in federal funding for the State of Indiana. Indiana's population is estimated to be around 6 million -- up from 5.5 million in 1990 (the last official U.S. Bureau of Census count).

Census Facts

- Census officials estimate that they missed more than 8.8 million people in 1990, mostly children, minorities and the poor.
- Four in 10 households did not return the census forms sent by the government in 1990.

You should have already received your form in the mail. The results will be used to determine federal funding for roads, schools, hospitals, services for the elderly and many other local needs.

There will be two forms. Nationwide, five out of six households will receive the short form which will ask questions about your name, sex, age, relationship to others in your household, Hispanic origin, race and whether your home is owned or rented. It will take approximately ten minutes to finish the form. A longer form will be mailed to the remaining households, asking questions about education, ancestry, employment, disability and others. This form will take

approximately 38 minutes to finish.

To make sure everyone is included, census workers will distribute forms to people who live in group settings, such as universities and colleges, nursing homes, transitional shelters, correctional institutions, and halfway houses.

Census information *cannot* be shared with others, including Immigration and Naturalization Services, welfare services, Internal Revenue Service, police, courts and the military.

Be counted --- complete and return your form today!

Housing Trust Fund

New legislation will help families with housing

New legislation will establish a housing trust fund in Marion County to aid low income families in purchasing or leasing housing in allocated areas in Marion County.

The housing trust fund would assist Marion County families that fall 80 percent below the county median income. Families that qualify would be able to purchase or lease property that was constructed, rehabilitated, or acquired specifically for the housing trust fund program.

Revenues for the housing trust fund would be generated through taxes that are collected from the allocated areas and from payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTS). PILOTS are an alternative to taxes that low income families pay. Funding from the housing trust fund are to be used only to cover fixed administration costs and for the housing costs.



Rep. Crawford discusses legislation with fellow legislators.



Session News Organ Donations

Employees at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles will be required to ask whether driver's license applicants wish to make an anatomical gift. Those who choose to do so will have an identifying symbol placed on their licenses.

Often, individuals believe that they are registered as organ donors, but in fact they are not. This ensures that employees ask applicants.

The Bureau of Motor Vehicles will now have the ability to establish the Anatomical Gift Promotion Fund, which would receive donations for organizations that promote the procurement of organs for anatomical gifts.

Environment

Reports of a massive fish kill in the White River in central Indiana led legislators to join with Gov. O'Bannon in passing several environmental protection initiatives.

One bill will require the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) to compile a report on restoration of the river and evaluate procedures to speed up reaction time in the event of future hazardous spills. We also will improve notification procedures to protect people living in contaminated areas, and double the fines charged to polluters.



Rep. Bill Crawford

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Call the Statehouse toll-free
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State legislative web site

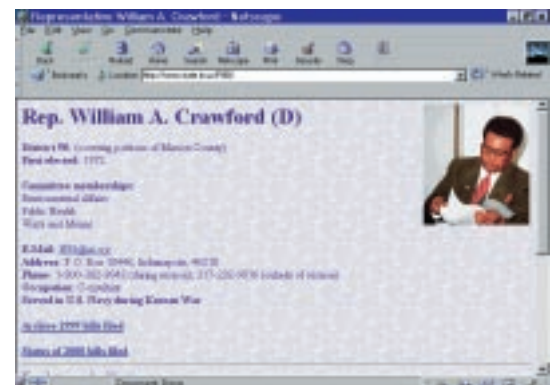
The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R98 and explore various items related to the legislature.

A new feature on my web site will allow you to request various House publications. We currently offer publications specifically designed for senior citizens, grade-school children, and high school students in the process of choosing a college. Other publications give a general overview of various Indiana state agencies, offer a guide to women's health and advise how to avoid being the victim of a scam. There is also a booklet available which details every bill that became law during this year's legislative session.

You may also request booklets by calling my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

Top Five State Web Sites*

1. State Job Bank
2. Hoosier Lottery Homepage
3. Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Search
4. General Assembly homepage
5. Dept. of Environmental Management homepage

*Based on number of visitors as of February 25, 2000